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In which the Lord of Dreams makes preparations to visit the realms infernal; farewells are said; a toast is drunk; and in Hell the Adversary makes certain preparations of his own.

SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS

the

SANDMAN™

SEASON OF MISTS 1

gaiman jones jones III

ONCE UPON A TIME, THERE WAS A PLACE THAT WASN'T A PLACE.

IT HAD MANY NAMES: AVERNUS, GEHENNA, TARTARUS, HADES, ABADDON, SHEOL...

IT WAS AN INFERNO OF PAIN AND FLAME AND ICE, WHERE EVERY NIGHTMARE HAD COME TRUE LONG SINCE.

WE'LL CALL IT HELL.

IT WAS NOT CONSIDERED A PLEASANT PLACE BY THE MAJORITY OF ITS INHABITANTS; HOWEVER, BEING DEAD, AND BEING THERE (AS THEY IMAGINED) AGAINST THEIR WILL, THEIR OPINIONS COUNTED FOR LITTLE.

AND INDEED, HAD HELL BEEN PLEASANT, THEY WOULD HAVE FELT CHEATED: THEY WERE THERE FOR PAIN, FOR SUFFERING, FOR TORMENT.

WHICH THEY RECEIVED IN ABUNDANCE.

THE OTHER INHABITANTS OF THIS PLACE WERE NOT DEAD; HOWEVER, NEITHER WERE THEY ALIVE, IN ANY BIOLOGICAL SENSE OF THE WORD.

HUMANITY CALLED THEM DEMONS WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING WHAT IT HAD NAMED.

THERE WAS LITTLE THAT DEMONKIND HAD IN COMMON WITH THE LEGIONS OF DAMNED SOULS WITH WHOM THEY SHARED THE INFERNAL MARCHES.

HOWEVER, THEY WERE ALL AGREED ON ONE THING.

THIS WAS AS BAD AS IT GOT.

IT *COULDN'T* GET ANY *WORSE*.

CONVERSION BY WILDSTORM

SO THIS IS YOUR LIBRARY, HUH, LUCIEN? IT'S A BIG PLACE.

WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT IT, THEN?

OH, IT'S A VERY UNUSUAL LIBRARY, MATTHEW. SOMEWHERE IN HERE IS EVERY STORY THAT HAS EVER BEEN DREAMED.

THE LOST ROAD J.R.R. TOLKIEN
THE MAN WHO WAS OCTOBER G. K. CHESTERTON
POICTESME BABYLON JAMES BRANCH CABELL
THE CONSCIENCE OF SHERLOCK HOLMES ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE
THE RETURN OF EDWIN DROOD CHARLES DICKENS
THE HAND OF GLORY ERASMUS FRY
THE DARK GOD'S DARLINGS LORD DUNSANY
LOVE CAN BE MURDER RAYMOND CHANDLER
PSMITH AND JEEVES P.G. WODEHOUSE
ALICE'S L
THEY BEHIND THE MOON CARROLL

THEY'RE JUST BOOKS.

OH YES. BUT UNUSUAL BOOKS. YOU'LL FIND NONE OF THEM ON EARTH. IN THIS SECTION, FOR EXAMPLE, ARE NOVELS THEIR AUTHORS NEVER WROTE, OR NEVER FINISHED, EXCEPT IN DREAMS.

MM. I WAS NEVER A BIG READER, TO BE HONEST. I WAS MORE A MAN OF ACTION WHEN I WAS ALIVE.

ANYWAY, YOU MUST BE PLEASED TO HAVE THE LIBRARY BACK.

I AM THE KEEPER OF THE LIBRARY, MATTHEW. WITHOUT IT I AM NOTHING.

WERE IT TO BE DESTROYED AGAIN, IT WOULD DESTROY ME AS WELL.

YEAH?-- SAY, WATCH THIS...

NEVERMORE!

GOOD, HUH?

THE COMPLETE POE IS IN THE SOUTHERN ANNEX. ALL THE BOOKS AND TALES AND PLAYS AND POEMS HE NEVER WROTE, ALL HERE. WOULD YOU LIKE ME TO READ SOME TO YOU?

HUH? LUCIEN, I WAS DOING PETER LORRE IN THAT ROGER CORMAN MOVIE...

Lucien. Matthew. We must talk.

I will be in the Great Hall.

IMMEDIATELY, LORD.

I DIDN'T KNOW HE COULD DO THAT.

MATTHEW-- OUR LORD IS DREAM...

THIS IS HIS CASTLE, HIS SEAT OF POWER, AT THE *HEART* OF THE DREAMING.

IN THIS PLACE, HE CAN DO *WHATEVER* HE *WISHES*.

ONE MOMENT. I MUST LOCK THE DOOR--CAN'T HAVE ANY BOOKS GETTING OUT...

I WONDER *WHY* HE WANTS TO TALK TO US.

Library of Dreams -Lucien-

I, UH, DON'T THINK HE JUST WANTS TO TALK TO US, LUCIEN...

GANGWAY, AMIGOS!

I THINK HE WANTS TO TALK TO EVERYBODY.

Hello.

I thought I should talk to you--talk to all of you.

It seems I am going to have to leave this place. I may be away for quite a while.

I might not be coming back.

SEASON of MISTS Chapter ~1

In which the Lord of Dreams makes preparations to visit the realms infernal; farewells are said; a toast is drunk; and in Hell the adversary makes certain preparations of his own.

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Two years ago I returned to this realm after an...enforced absence.

During that time, the Dreaming decayed. Badly.

Now it appears I must leave you once more.

Let me explain.

Some time ago, I entered into a brief relationship with a mortal woman.

For a number of reasons, the relationship did not terminate in a satisfactory manner, and, against my wishes, the lady... killed herself.

I... condemned her to Hell.

I sentenced her to torment and imprisonment, never to end unless one day I stood before her, and told her she was forgiven, that she was free.

She has been there now ten thousand years.

Her name is Nada.

It has been pointed out to me... that I may have acted hastily. Mistakenly. Wrongly.

That what I did was not honorable.

So I intend to go to Hades, and set her free.

SO? YOU GO TO HELL, YOU TELL HER SHE CAN GO NOW, YOU COME BACK. WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

The big deal? The big deal is that things are not that simple.

Two years ago I had cause to visit Hell.

My helmet was in the possession of a demon. I needed it. I wanted it back.

I contended with Choronzon, the demon. And I won. They returned my helm.

Unfortunately, in so doing I incurred the enmity of Lucifer Morningstar--the Lightbringer. I humiliated him, in front of all the demons of his domain.

Re-entering Hell at this point would be a mistake.

If it means direct conflict with Lucifer...on his own territory...things may not... work out satisfactorily.

Unfortunately I have no other choice. I am still going to Hell.

I may not return.

If I am destroyed, another aspect of Dream will fill my shoes. I trust you all will make my re-assumption of the role an easy one.

If I am imprisoned in Hell, then matters will be more difficult. I have made certain plans to cover this, which I will discuss with some of you individually before I leave.

However, let me make one thing quite clear.

I do not wish to see this world fall into ruins.

I do not want to see a repeat of what occurred the last time I was gone.

If that occurred once more, I would be displeased.

I trust you understand me well enough that I need not elaborate.

Perhaps I will meet with no opposition in Hell. Perhaps whatever opposition I encounter may be easily dealt with. Perhaps...

Perhaps this audience is unnecessary.

Perhaps not.

After all, I would not like any of you worry unduly.

That is all.

I... trust I shall see you all again.

Thank you. You may go.

CHEER UP. IT'LL BE FINE. YOU'LL SEE. IT'LL BE FINE.

Matthew?

I thought I sent you back to Eve's cave, when I sent the others away...

I DIDN'T GO. I WANTED TO STICK AROUND. DO YOU MIND?

...No.

SO THERE'S REALLY A LUCIFER, HUH? I MEAN, I KNEW THERE WAS A HELL...

Y'SEE, I DID THIS DEAL ONCE, BUT IT ALL TURNED TO SHIT.

WHAT'S HE LIKE? HAVE YOU KNOWN HIM LONG?

Since the beginning. He was the Creator's finest creation: the angel Samael, called Lucifer. It means "the bringer of light."

Of all the angels he was the wisest, the most beautiful, the most powerful.

Saving only his Creator, he is, perhaps, the most powerful being there is.

MORE POWERFUL THAN YOU?

Oh yes. By far.

WELL, AT LEAST YOU'VE GOT THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE ON YOUR SIDE.

That would not be honorable, Matthew.

I have already sent a messenger to the Lord of Hell, to let him know that I will be coming.

One must do these things properly.

SMART, BOSS.

REAL SMART.

GREAT PRINCE?

mm?

WE HAVE A *PRISONER*, SIRE.

SO?

HE CLAIMS TO BE A *HERALD*. AN *ENVOY* FROM THE REALM OF THE *DREAM KING*.

ah?

THEN *BRING* HIM TO US, ALICHINO.

THE *PRISONER*, SIRE.

AH. PRINCE LUCIFER--

SCHUCK UCK, *SGUN*. SHVEEG VHEN ZHU AH *SCHVOGEN* TZU. GHETCH *DOWNG* ONG HYOUH *KNEES*.

we...*know* you.

YES, WE KNOW YOU OF *OLD*. THE FIRST MAN BORN OF WOMAN. WHAT IS YOUR NAME?

CAIN. LORD.

ah, yes. DELIVER YOUR MESSAGE, CAIN.

MESSAGE. YES. RIGHT. UM.

AHEM: "FROM THE LORD OF THE DREAMWORLD, PRINCE OF STORIES, MONARCH OF THE SLEEPING MARCHES, HIS DARKNESS DREAM OF THE ENDLESS, TO HIS INFERNAL MAJESTY, LUCIFER, CALLED MORNINGSTAR: GREETINGS.

"OUR RIGHT TRUSTY AND WELL-BELOVED COUSIN--"

NO. NOT THE MESSAGE. JUST THE CONTENT.

HE IS COMING HERE. HE HOPES YOU WILL ALLOW HIM ACCESS TO YOUR REALM, BUT WHETHER YOU WILL OR NO, HE IS COMING.

THERE.

AH.

SHALL WE TAKE HIM OUT AND DESTROY HIM NOW, SIRE?

EAZCH HIZH FAZSHE...

YOU CANNOT HURT HIM. WE MAY NOT GIVE YOU OUR PERMISSION.

CAIN IS UNDER THE PROTECTION OF ONE FAR GREATER THAN THE LORD OF DREAMS.

"AND THE LORD SAID UNTO HIM, THEREFORE WHOSOEVER SLAYETH CAIN, VENGEANCE SHALL BE TAKEN ON HIM SEVENFOLD. AND THE LORD SET A MARK UPON CAIN, LEST ANY FINDING HIM SHOULD KILL HIM."

"AND CAIN WENT OUT FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD, AND DWELT IN THE LAND OF NOD, ON THE EAST OF EDEN."

WHERE YOU STILL LIVE, EH?

YOU'RE UNDER HIS PROTECTION. DREAM WAS SENSIBLE TO SEND YOU AS HIS MESSENGER--ANY OTHER ENVOY WOULD HAVE BEEN RETURNED WITH HIS LIVER IN HIS MOUTH. BUT HE KNEW THAT.

LOOSE HIS BONDS AND LEAVE US.

VHUT NGY ROAHD RUSZCIVAH...

DO YOU WISH TO MAKE US REPEAT OURSELF?

NO, SIRE! YOUR PARDON, SIRE!

Cain.

You *must* know, of course, of the *Cainites*?

Can't say that I do...

Gnostic sect. Second century. They rejected the books of the New Testament in favor of the *Gospel of Judas*.

They believed that *we* created the heaven and the earth, and that *you* were the persecuted party in that *unfortunate* affair with your brother.

They *also* held that the way to *salvation* was to give way to *lust* and *temptation* in *all* things.

And *no* greater *percentage* of them turned up *here* than of *any other religion*. Amusing, isn't it?

I wouldn't know.

You know... your Lord Morpheus *embarrassed* us, publicly; that we swore then that we would *destroy* him...

There *were* rumors...

And now he's returning to *Hell*...

Well, well, *well*... he's coming back.

Isn't that *wonderful*.

HE *SMILED* AT ME! DID YOU SEE *THAT*, LYTA? HE JUST *SMILED!*

I DON'T THINK THEY SMILE AT THAT AGE, CARLA. IT WAS PROBABLY JUST *GAS*. HE'S *ONLY* A WEEK OLD.

HMPH. HAVE YOU GOT A NAME FOR HIM YET?

NOT ONE I *LIKE*. I WAS GOING TO CALL HIM *STEVE*, AFTER MY *FATHER*, OR *HECTOR* AFTER, WELL, AFTER *HECTOR*. BUT WHEN HE WAS BORN...

HE DOESN'T *LOOK* LIKE A STEVE. OR A HECTOR. *DOES* HE?

MM. I DUNNO. HE JUST LOOKS LIKE A *BABY*. SORT OF *BALD* AND *JUST BOILED*.

BUT HON, YOU'RE GOING TO *HAVE* TO FIND A NAME FOR HIM. YOU *CAN'T* JUST CALL HIM "*THING*" OR "*HEY YOU*" HALL.

I'VE STILL GOT A *WHILE*. I'LL THINK OF ONE.

HAD ANY OTHER IDEAS ABOUT WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO BE *DOING*?

YOU MEAN LIKE BRINGING UP "HEY YOU" HALL ISN'T GOING TO KEEP ME BUSY *ENOUGH*?

NO. NO IDEAS YET.

BUT I *WILL* DO SOMETHING WHEN HE'S A BIT BIGGER. MAYBE GO BACK TO SCHOOL.

I DON'T THINK I COULD GO BACK TO THE *COSTUME* STUFF, NOW... NOT WITH *HECTOR* GONE. IT WOULDN'T BE THE *SAME*...

I'VE GOT A WHILE. AND *MONEY'S* NOT A PROBLEM. I DUNNO--I'LL FIGURE SOMETHING OUT. ANYWAY-- *THANKS* FOR COMING OVER, CARLA.

AW... I *STILL* CAN'T GET OVER HIS CUTEY-WOOTIE WIDDLE HANDS...

ME NEITHER. LISTEN, I'LL SEE YOU *SOON*. *OKAY*?

YOU?

YOU--YOU GET AWAY FROM MY CHILD--YOU--DON'T YOU TOUCH HIM--I'M WARNING YOU--

Calm yourself, Hippolyta. You have nothing to fear from me, today.

I have come to see your son. That is all.

YOU KILLED HIS FATHER. IF YOU THINK I'M GOING TO LET YOU TOUCH HIM...

Please. I have little enough time as it is. And your son is important.

It is unusual for a child to gestate in dreams. It has not happened for so long...

A child formed in my realm...

I DON'T KNOW *WHO* YOU REALLY ARE. BUT IT'S *YOUR* FAULT THAT HE DOESN'T HAVE A *FATHER*--OR A *NAME*.

HE'S *MY SON*. HE'S NOTHING TO *DO* WITH YOU.

There is much you do not understand, Hippolyta Hall.

Perhaps one day we will talk further. But for now, I merely wanted to see the boy.

I have been forced to embark upon a journey. I may be away some time.

FINE. YOU'VE *SEEN* HIM. NOW GET *OUT*.

Very well. Good afternoon, Hippolyta.

By the by, his name is Daniel.

...DANIEL?

I move from dreamer to dreamer, from dream to dream, hunting for what I need.

Slipping and sliding and flickering through dreams; and the dreamers will wake, and wonder why this dream seemed different, wonder how real their lives can truly be.

One more person to see, then. One final goodbye to be said, and then to Hell.

To Nada.

To Lucifer.

Here: in the dream of Cecilie Latour, as her father, now long dead, walks her through the family cellars.

PAY NO ATTENTION TO THAT MAN BEHIND THE CURTAIN, MA CHERIE.

There.

I'M SORRY, YOUR MAJESTY. THE BASTARD HARD DISK'S CRASHED AGAIN. BUT THIS HARDWARE'S STILL BETTER THAN ROGER BACON'S MECHANICAL HEAD.

TIME IS, TIME WAS, TIME'S PAST, SIR ROBERT.

BOLD AS BRASS, MA'AM.

Hob? Might I intrude?

GOOD LORD! IT'S YOU.

YOU'RE A BIT EARLY, AREN'T YOU? I THOUGHT YOU WEREN'T DUE FOR ANOTHER NINETY-NINE YEARS.

Yes, you're dreaming, Hob.

And yes, I am early.

I have brought you a gift.

HANG ON. QUEEN BESS... A COMPUTER... YOU...

BLOODY HELL. I'M DREAMING, AREN'T I?

CHATEAU LAFITTE 1828? I DIDN'T THINK THERE WAS A BOTTLE OF THAT STUFF LEFT ON EARTH.

I doubt there is. But a few bottles remain, in dreams.

IF THIS IS *REALLY* YOU, THEN YOU'RE *PARTICULARLY* EARLY. WHAT'S THE *OCCASION?* IS IT YOUR *BIRTHDAY?*

You must be born, to have a birthday.

SORRY?

No, it is not my birthday.

I thought I ought to talk to you. You see... it is possible I may not be able to make our next meeting.

I am going on a journey. Perhaps I will return soon, perhaps not. I may be gone for a long time.

YOU KNOW, THE IDEA OF WHAT SOMEONE LIKE *YOU* CONSIDERS A *LONG TIME* SENDS *SHIVERS* DOWN MY *SPINE.*

BUT YOU'LL DEFINITELY COME BACK, I SUPPOSE? EVENTUALLY?

Drink the wine, Hob Gadling.

SHOULDN'T WE MAKE SOME KIND OF A TOAST?

If you wish. Make a toast, then.

HANG ON A SECOND. IF WE'RE GOING TO MAKE A TOAST, LET ME THINK OF A *GOOD* ONE...

GOT IT. LISTEN TO THIS...

TING

"TO ABSENT FRIENDS, LOST LOVES, OLD GODS, AND THE SEASON OF MISTS; AND MAY EACH AND EVERY ONE OF US ALWAYS GIVE THE DEVIL HIS DUE."

THAT WAS A BLOODY PECULIAR TOAST. I DON'T KNOW WHY I SAID THAT STUFF... AH WELL, YOU SAY STRANGE THINGS IN DREAMS...

IT'S A GOOD WINE, MY FRIEND.

You may keep the bottle. I must go, I am afraid--I have procrastinated long enough.

OH. WELL, IT WAS LOVELY SEEING YOU.

EVEN IF IT IS ONLY A DREAM.

Thank you. Good night, Hob.

BOBBY? YOU WERE TALKING IN YOUR SLEEP, LOVE. WOKE ME UP.

MM? YEAH? SORRY, LOVE. I HAD A DREAM. A SILLY DREAM.

A SILLY, SILLY DREAM...

BELOW YOU IS OUR DOMAIN, FIRST-BORN MAN. LOOK AT IT.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

HOME TO MILLIONS OF DEMONS, TO AN UNCOUNTABLE NUMBER OF MORTAL SOULS. DO YOU THINK THEY ARE *HAPPY?*

AH. AH. AH.

WHY, JUST RECENTLY ONE OF THE *MINOR DEMONS* --SOME LITTLE YELLOW RHYMER-- THOUGHT TO DECLARE HIMSELF A *KING OF HELL*, TO USURP THE TRIUMVIRATE...

IT CAME TO NOTHING. THESE THINGS NEVER *DO*. BUT PERHAPS IT MADE HIM HAPPY. *BRIEFLY.*

AH. AH. OHNO. PLEASE. OHNO.

WHAT WE WONDER IS WHY THEY *BOTHER*. THESE LITTLE DEMONS...

THEY COME TO OUR PALACE AND SAY, "WE HAVE BATTLED: THERE WILL BE A COALITION." *WE* SAY, VERY WELL. AND THEY *OUST* EACH OTHER, AND *DESTROY* EACH OTHER, AND IT MATTERS *NOT.*

OR THEY SAY, "LUCIFER, YOU ARE DEPOSED, YOU ARE NO LONGER KING OF HELL-- AS IF MERELY *SAYING* SOMETHING WERE ENOUGH TO MAKE IT *TRUE.*

THEY BELIEVE THEMSELVES LUCIFER'S *EQUALS*, CAIN, ALL THESE PITIFUL LITTLE *GNATS.*

BUT THERE IS ONLY *ONE* THAT WE HAVE EVER OWNED TO BE OUR SUPERIOR. THERE IS BUT *ONE* GREATER THAN US. AND TO *HIM*...

TO *HIM* WE NO LONGER *SPEAK.*

OHTHANKYOULORD, THANKYOUTHANKYOU THANK YOUTHANKYOU...

STILL. "BETTER TO REIGN IN HELL, THAN SERVE IN HEAVEN." EH, LITTLE BROTHER-KILLER?

SUH-CERTAINLY, LORD LUCIFER. WHATEVER YOU SAY, LORD LUCIFER.

WE DIDN'T SAY IT. MILTON SAID IT. AND HE WAS BLIND.

OHHH... GO BACK TO YOUR MASTER. TELL HIM WE RECEIVED HIS MESSAGE. TELL HIM THAT WE WILL BE **WAITING** FOR HIM. TELL HIM...

TELL HIM THAT **HELL IS**...ANTICIPATING ...HIS VISIT--MOST **AVIDLY**.

NOW GO.

hahahaha!

FOLA! YOU! ALL OF YOU--DEMONS AND DAMNED, NOBLES AND SLAVES. IT IS LUCIFER WHO SPEAKS, THE FIRST AMONG THE FALLEN.

FEAR OUR WORDS.

IT WAS TEN BILLION YEARS AGO THAT WE FIRST CAME TO THIS PLACE. TEN BILLION YEARS AGO WE FIRST BEGAN TO REIGN.

SINCE THEN, ONE BY ONE, WILLINGLY OR OTHERWISE, EACH OF YOU HAS FOLLOWED US HERE.

YOU HAVE TAKEN UP RESIDENCE IN THIS WORLD. TAKEN YOUR OPPORTUNITIES FOR PAIN AND PLEASURE.

IN HELL YOU HAVE FOUGHT AND EATEN, SCREWED AND SCREAMED, REJOICED AND HATED AND HURT.

NOW, WE DISCOVER, WITH, WE MUST ADMIT, A CERTAIN PERVERSE DELIGHT, THAT ONE MORE COMES HERE. MORPHEUS OF THE ENDLESS. THE DREAMLORD.

THE NEWS OF HIS VISIT HAS CRYSTALLIZED CERTAIN MATTERS WE HAVE BEEN PONDERING FOR MILLENNIA.

LISTEN, DAMNED CHILDREN.

THIS DAY MORPHEUS IS COMING TO US, IN A FUTILE ATTEMPT TO FREE ONE HE LOVES FROM OUR DOMAIN.

SOME SAY THAT ONE DAY IN HELL IS MUCH LIKE ALL THE REST. THAT IN THIS PLACE OF FLUX ETERNAL, NOTHING CHANGES.

BUT THIS DAY IN HELL. THIS DAY YOU SHALL ALL REMEMBER FOR EVER.

AND SO SHALL HE.

"SIRE--CAIN HAS RETURNED. HE HAS GIVEN YOUR MESSAGE TO THE MORNINGSTAR."

"Ah. Where is he?"

THERE, MY LORD.

...HIS EYES... MY LORD? I...I GAVE HIM YOUR MESSAGE. HE SAYS HE'LL BE WUH-WAITING FOR YOU...HE SAYS HE'S LOOKING *FORWARD* TO IT...

MY LORD--HE IS MOST TERRIBLE. HE... HE DIDN'T CARE ABOUT MY MARK. HE JUST DIDN'T CARE. HE THOUGHT IT WAS *FUNNY*...

Rest, my servant. You have done well.

MY LORD-- I *BEG* YOU TO RECONSIDER. PLEASE. IT *ISN'T* TOO LATE...

We do what we must, Lucien.

Sometimes we can choose the path we follow. Sometimes our choices are made for us.

And sometimes we have no choice at all.

Goodbye, Lucien.

FAREWELL, MY LORD.

To Be Continued

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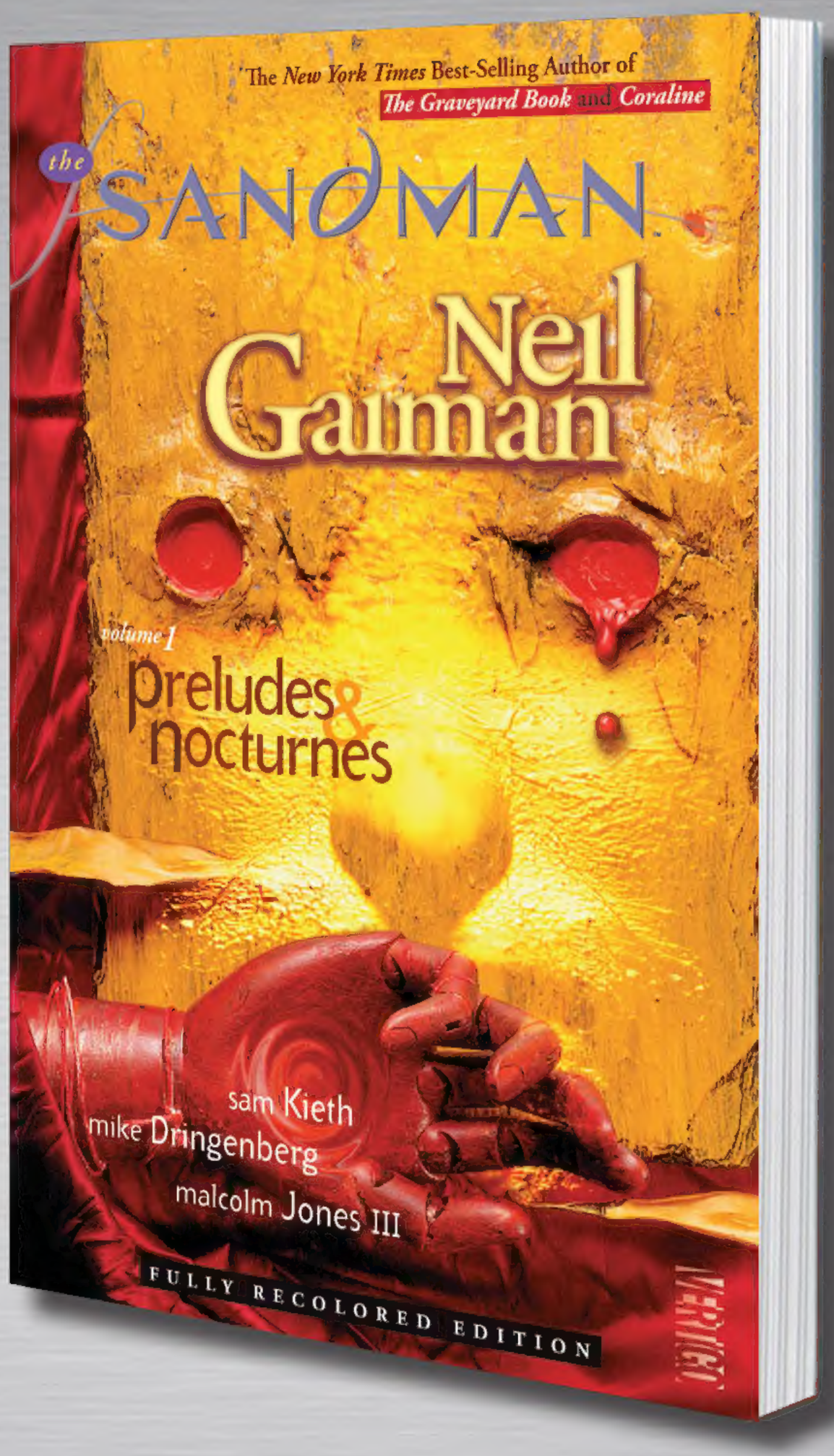

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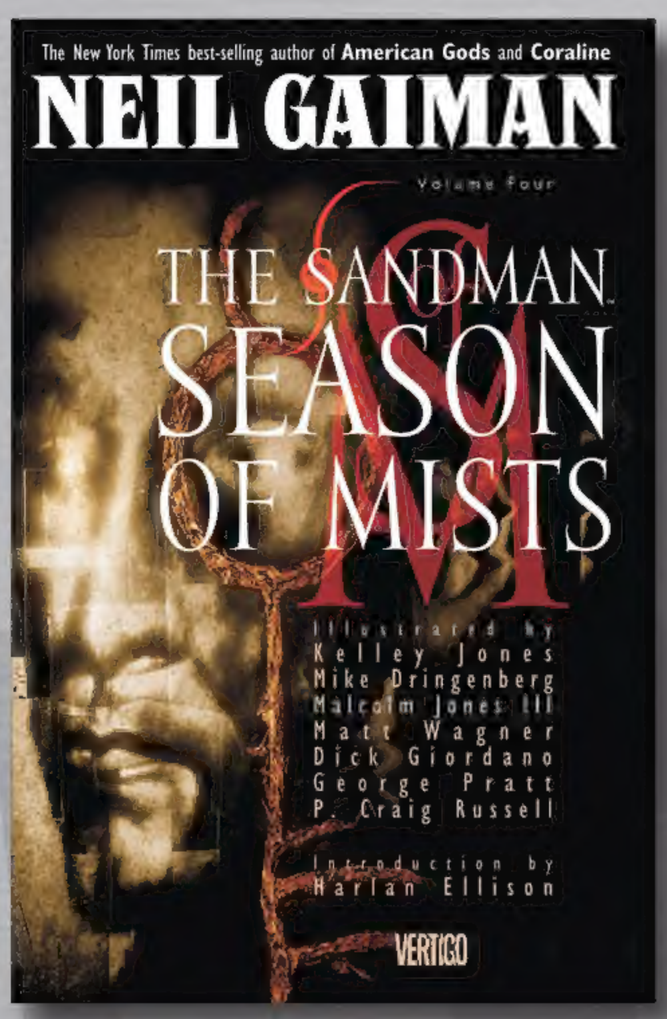

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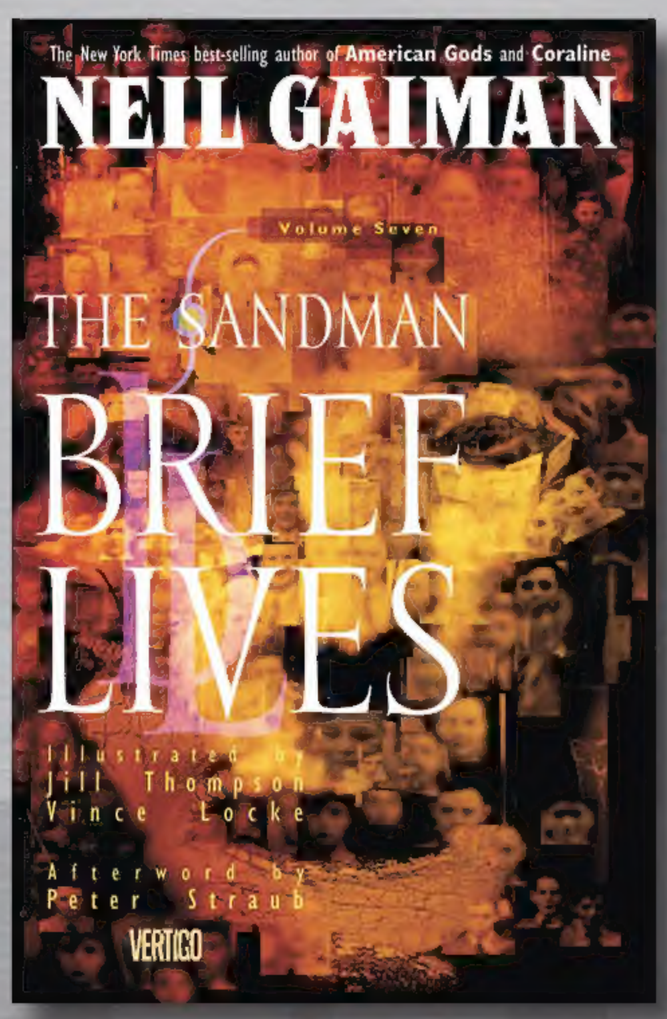

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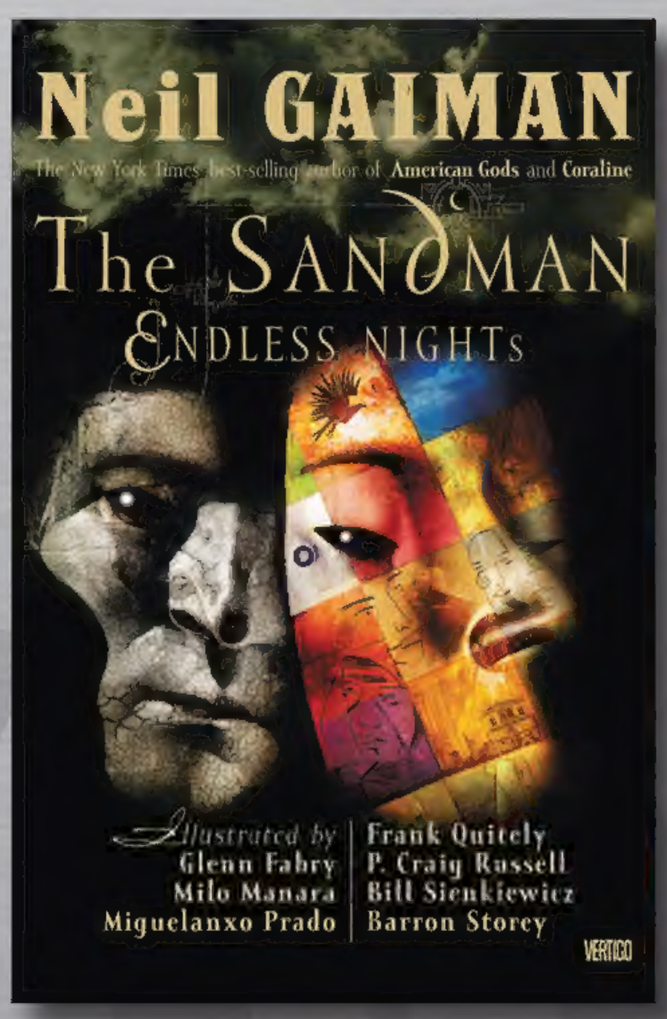

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